



UNIVERSITY COURT

MINUTES

of the meeting of the University Court held in the Boardroom on **Wednesday 26 April 2023** from 14:00.

Chair: Mr M Shaw

Ms N Ahmed

Ms A Duffy

Mr A Marks

Professor L Bacon

Professor A Irons*

Ms O Robertson

Mr A Bailey

Mr F Keir*

Professor E Sim

Ms L Baldie

Ms V Lynch*

Dr K Smith

Mr J Barnett

Ms C MacEachen

Ms R Donoghue

Mr I McDonald

Secretary to Court: Ms C Summers

In attendance: Professor A Brown (Observer)
Mr D Brew (Observer, from minute 80)
Ms D Feriancova
Ms E Fraser
Ms J McKenzie*,
Mr G Weir
Mr F Greig (minute 83)
Dr H Coutts* (minute 84-85)

**attended via MS teams*

NON-RESERVED BUSINESS

Preliminary Matters

73. Welcome and Apologies for Absence

The Chair welcomed the Chancellor, Professor Brown, who was joining as an Observer, and noted that the Chair-Elect, Mr Brew would join the meeting as an Observer after agenda item 6.

Apologies for absence were received from Ms H Dunk, Dr H Mehrpouya, and from Ms L Hamilton who was currently on leave of absence.

Departure of members

The Chair noted that since the last meeting of Court, two members, Ms G Ghafoor and Dr A Ingram, had resigned.

Ms Ghafoor had been a member of Court since 2016 and had served as Chair of Audit and Risk Committee (ARC), and subsequently as Chair of People, Health and Equality Committee (PHEC). Ms Ghafoor had been a strong supporter of the University, both in her role as a member of Court and in her professional life.

Dr Ingram had been a member of Court since 2018 and Vice-Chair since 2020. Dr Ingram had also been Chair of Governance and Nominations Committee (GNC), and during her tenure on Court had been a member of PHEC, the Finance and Corporate Performance, Remuneration and Chair's committees. Dr Ingram had made a significant contribution to Court, particularly through her work on GNC and acting as lead on the external Review of the Effectiveness of Court in 2022.

Court formally noted its thanks to Ms Ghafoor and Dr Ingram for their contributions to the University and to the work of Court.

74. Declaration of Potential Conflicts of Interest

The Chair reminded members of their responsibility to indicate if they had, or could be perceived to have, a conflict of interest in relation to the non-reserved items for discussion. No conflicts were declared.

75. Public Engagement Event

Court noted that the annual public stakeholder event had taken place earlier that day and that attendance had been higher than in previous years. Court thanked all those involved in organising the event.

Court and Governance Matters

76. Minutes of the meeting of the Chair's Committee held on 17 April 2023 (unapproved) (for information)

CT/0423/50

Court noted the unapproved minutes (agreed with the Chair of the Committee) of the meeting of the Chair's Committee held on 17 April 2023, submitted as enclosure 50.

77. Minutes of the meeting of Court held on 15 February 2023 (Non-Reserved)

CT/0423/51

Court received and considered the minutes, submitted as enclosure 51 and approved them as an accurate record.

78. Matters arising from these minutes

Minute 48: Consultation meetings with Court on the international strategy

Court noted that these meetings had taken place.

Minute 54: Scottish Government Consultation on Post-School Education

Court noted, that due to timing issues, the response had not been circulated in advance of submission, but that it would now be circulated for information.

Minute 55 – Draft Court and Committee dates for 2023-24

Court noted that some minor amendments would be made to reflect the new Chair of Court's availability and that the updated schedule would be circulated to Court for information as soon as possible. No changes were proposed to the dates of Court meetings.

Minute 57 – Estates Strategy

Court noted that following discussion by the Senior Management Team, the Estates Strategy would now come to the June meetings of the Finance and Corporate Performance Committee (FCPC) and Court.

Minute 61: Senate Review

Court noted that the minutes of Senate and the revised Terms of Reference were on the agenda for consideration later in the meeting.

79. Appointment of the New Chair of Court**CT/0423/52**

The Chair thanked the Appointment Committee, and in particular Ms Dunk as Chair of the Committee, for their considerable work in overseeing the process and bringing it to a successful conclusion.

The Vice-Principal (Strategy & Governance) and University Secretary, Ms Summers, introduced the paper which summarised the process for the appointment of the new Chair of Court. Court noted that, in line with the requirements of the Scottish Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Act 2016, an election had taken place from 15 to 29 March. The winner of the election was Mr David Brew and Court was asked to confirm his appointment as Chair of Court.

Members commented on the low turnout in the election but noted that this was in line with previous elections in other universities.

The Court agreed to appoint Mr David Brew as the Chair of Court for a term of three years from 16 May 2023 to 15 May 2026.

Thereafter, the Chair invited Mr Brew to join the meeting as an Observer and Court congratulated him on his appointment.

80. Court and Committee Membership Update**CT/0423/53**

Ms Summers introduced the paper and noted that, following the resignations reported earlier in the meeting, Court currently had three vacancies for lay members. It was noted that another vacancy would arise when Mr McDonald came to the end of his third and final term in December 2023.

GNC had already agreed to advertise for new lay members once the Chair of Court appointment had concluded, and this advert was now live, with a deadline for applications of 2 May. It was noted that the intention was for GNC to review and shortlist applications at its meeting on 15 May 2023, to interview candidates in late May, and for recommendations for the appointment of new members to come to Court in June.

Ms Summers noted that Dr K Smith, the elected academic staff member on Court, would be leaving the University at the end of May and that an election would be held during May to appoint a replacement.

Court noted the Court and Committee Membership Update.

Matters for Discussion/Approval

81. International and Partnerships Strategy

CT/0423/54

Professor Irons introduced the paper that provided the International and Partnerships Strategy developed in consultation with the Abertay community. It was noted that Court members had had an opportunity to contribute to this strategy, both at the pre-Court meeting in February and at the special consultation sessions which had been arranged. The Strategy had also been discussed by FCPC and Senate at their meetings in March 2023.

Professor Irons noted that following a competitive recruitment process, Ms MacEachen had been appointed as Dean of International and Partnerships and would take up her new role in June. Court congratulated Ms MacEachen on her appointment.

Court discussed the strategy and welcomed the changes which had been made in response to feedback during the consultation process. Members noted the alignment with the Civic Engagement Strategy and were also reassured that a monitoring and reporting framework was being developed, with FCPC receiving a report at each meeting and Court receiving the first annual report on implementation in June 2024. The need for clarification of the status of students, particularly in relation to the Abertay Students' Association, was noted.

Court formally approved the International and Partnerships Strategy for publication.

82. Civic Engagement Strategy

CT/0423/55

The Director of External and Corporate Relations, Ms McKenzie introduced the paper that provided the Civic Engagement Strategy developed in consultation with the Abertay community. It was noted that there had been extensive engagement on this strategy and that it had also been discussed by FCPC and Senate in March. Ms McKenzie noted that the paper included an Implementation Plan that would not be published externally but set out a proposed set of achievable actions, within existing resource, to ensure the ambition was delivered.

Court welcomed the strategy and noted the intention to offer staff a day per year to engage on relevant activities. Members noted the importance of monitoring the uptake and impact of this commitment, and discussed how this might be developed further in future.

Court formally approved the Civic Engagement Strategy for publication.

Mr Greig joined the meeting.

83. Digital Strategy

CT/0423/56

The Head of IT and Corporate Services, Mr Greig introduced the paper that provided an update to the Digital Strategy published in 2020. He noted that this was a mid-term refresh of the strategy, reflecting the fast-moving digital environment. The updates focused on cybersecurity, sustainability, reinforcing the cloud first and mobile first approach, and optimising existing core systems and processes so they work more effectively and improve the user experience. The strategy had also been discussed by FCPC and Senate in March

Court noted that some of the research references in the document needed to be updated and it was agreed these would be reviewed before publication. Court had a wide-ranging discussion, covering the approach to hybrid teaching, the importance of the digital strategy for the implementation of the international and partnerships strategy, and the importance of training. Court noted the recent appointment of a Digital Productivity Officer.

In response to a question regarding the digital working practices for Court and its members, Ms Summers confirmed that the Head of Governance and Deputy Secretary was working with colleagues in IT to review the access and equipment provided to Court members.

Court formally approved the Digital Strategy for publication, subject to minor editorial amendments to update some references.

Mr Greig left the meeting.

Dr Coutts joined the meeting.

84. Key Performance Indicator Update

CT/0423/57

The Head of Planning and Insight, Dr Coutts introduced the annual update on the 15 key performance indicators (KPIs) that support the implementation of the current strategic plan. This paper had previously been considered by FCPC.

Court discussed the report, in particular KPI 1, the percentage of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants from the 20% most deprived postcode areas, and noted that there was ongoing discussion with the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) on this as part of the Outcome Agreement process. Court discussed the retention KPIs (4 and 5) noting that the relevant HESA Performance Indicators were no longer being published and that alternative datasets were being explored. Court noted the importance of comparing with external benchmarks, in addition to the internal reporting on retention which it received. Court also discussed KPI 6 relating to graduate outcomes and how this might be better measured to align with our priorities and local context.

Court approved the Key Performance Indicator Update.

85. Scottish Funding Council Funding Update **CT/0423/58**

Ms Summers introduced the paper that summarised the key points of the SFC 2023-24 indicative funding announcement. It was noted that the funding announcement was in line with the current planning assumptions of flat cash for 2023-24, and that in the current environment this represented a significant real-terms cut, reinforcing the importance of growing non-SFC income streams. It was noted that the final 2023-24 funding allocations were expected in May and a further update would be circulated at that time.

Court formally noted the report on SFC indicative funding for 2023-24.

Dr Coutts left the meeting.

Professor Irons left the meeting.

Committee Matters**86. Audit and Risk Committee** **CT/0423/59**

Minutes of the meeting held on 21 March 2023 (unapproved)

Mr Barnett as the Chair of ARC introduced the minutes that were largely for information although there was one item (item 42 Review of Financial Regulations) to consider for approval.

Court approved the revised Financial Regulations and noted the minutes of the meeting of ARC held on 21 March 2023.

87. Finance and Corporate Performance Committee

87.1 Minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on 15 February 2023 (approved)

CT/0423/60

Mr McDonald introduced the minutes that were for information, noting that the extraordinary meeting had been held to approve the time-critical purchase of specialist equipment. Court briefly discussed the case, receiving reassurance from the Director of Finance, Infrastructure and Corporate Services (FICS), Mr Weir regarding the arrangements which had been made.

Court noted the minutes of the meeting of FCPC held on 15 February 2023.

87.2 Minutes of the meeting held on 28 March 2023 (unapproved) **CT/0423/61**

Mr Marks as Chair of FCPC introduced the minutes that were for information, noting that several of the items considered by the Committee at its March meeting had already been discussed and approved by Court earlier in the meeting.

Court noted the minutes of the meeting of FCPC held on 28 March 2023.

88. Governance and Nominations Committee **CT/0423/62**

Minutes of the meeting held on 24 March 2023 (unapproved)

The Chair introduced the minutes that were largely for information although there were several items to consider for approval. Court noted that the draft Code of

Conduct, which was recommended for approval, would be reviewed once the 2023 version of the Scottish Code of Good Higher Education Governance was published.

Court approved:

- 88.1 the General Descriptor for Court Members (Annex A).
- 88.2 the Person Specification for Independent Court Members (Annex B).
- 88.3 the Rules for election of staff members to University Court (Annex C).
- 88.4 the appointment of Ms Dunk as the Chair of the People, Health & Equality Committee.
- 88.5 the draft Code of Conduct (Annex E).
- 88.6 the Senate Election timelines and process (Annex F).

Court noted the updated skills matrix provided as annex D of the paper and the Chair encouraged those members who had not yet completed the skills matrix to do so as a matter of urgency.

Finally, Court noted the minutes of the meeting of GNC held on 24 March 2023.

89. People, Health, and Equality Committee

CT/0423/63

Minutes of the meeting held 13 March 2023 (unapproved)

The Chair introduced the minutes in the absence of the Committee Chair. It was noted that the minutes were largely for information although there were two items to consider for approval.

Court approved:

- 89.1 the statutory equality mainstreaming report for submission and publication.
- 89.2 the revised social media policy.

Court noted the minutes of the meeting of PHEC held on 13 March 2023.

Senate Matters

90. Minutes of the meeting of Senate held on 29 March 2023

CT/0423/64

Professor Bacon as the Chair of Senate introduced the minutes that were largely for information although there was one item to consider for approval, Item 6 the Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (ELIR) 4 Abertay Year Follow-on Report.

Court noted the minutes of the meeting of Senate held on 29 March 2023 and approved the ELIR 4 Abertay Year Follow-on Report for submission.

91. Senate Terms of Reference

CT/0423/65

Ms Summers introduced the paper that asked Court to approve an updated version of the Senate Terms of Reference. It was noted that Court had considered a paper on the Review of Senate Remit and Membership at its last meeting and had requested a minor amendment to be made.

Court approved the revised Senate Terms of Reference.

92. Academic Matters Report**CT/0423/66**

Professor Bacon introduced the report in Professor Irons' absence and provided a brief overview. In response to a question, Professor Bacon gave an update on the use of Artificial Intelligence and the implications for teaching, learning, and assessment. It was agreed that it would be useful for Court to have a briefing session on this in the autumn.

Court congratulated Professor Bacon on her election to the Royal Society of Edinburgh and noted the Academic Matters report.

Matters for Information**93. Students' Association Report to Court****CT/0423/67**

Ms Robertson as the Students' Association President and Ms Baldie as the Students' Association Vice-President introduced the report which provided a brief overview of the Students' Association's recent activities.

Court congratulated Ms Robertson on her re-election as the Students' Association President for 2023-24.

Court noted the proposed survey on housing issues and Ms Baldie agreed to provide an update on the outcome of the survey in the next report in June. It was also agreed to explore the possibility of the Students' Association update reports being circulated more widely to University staff via the Community Update.

Court noted the report from the Students' Association.

94. Executive Group Report to Court**CT/0423/68**

Professor Bacon provided a brief overview of the report on behalf of the University Executive Group. Court discussed the student numbers update and noted the action which was currently being undertaken to improve recruitment. Court noted the limited impact to date of the current industrial action.

Court noted the report from the Executive Group.

95. Departure of Member

The Chair noted that this was Dr Smith's last meeting as she was leaving the University at the end of May. Court wished Dr Smith well in her new role and thanked her for her contribution, noting that Court had benefited greatly from her insights.

Professor Brown, Ms Fraser and Ms McKenzie left the meeting.

Secretary's note: The Chair asked Mr Weir to attend the reserved business with regards to item 26.

Date of the next meeting of Court: Wednesday 14 June 2023

Mr M Shaw

Chair